

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 IO-13 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 171644Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4863
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR MPOL MO SS
SUBJECT: MOROCCAN REACTIONS TO ISRAEL'S OPERATIONS IN LEBANON

REF: RABAT 1579, RABAT 1551

1. SUMMARY: IN A MODERATE YET PESSIMISTIC STATEMENT, KING HASSAN WARNED MARCH 16 THAT ISRAEL'S ACTIONS IN LEBANON ARE SERIOUSLY ENDANGERING CURRENT EGYPTIAN PEACE EFFORTS. HE CALLED FOR AN END TO THE "AGGRESSION" AND FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. REACTION FROM LOCAL PRESS AND POLITICAL PARTIES WAS, HOWEVER, MUCH MORE VIGOROUS IN ITS CONDEMNATION OF ISRAEL AND ARGUED THAT THE ISRAELI ATTACK HAD DEALT A "MORTAL BLOW" TO SADAT'S PEACE
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INITIATIVES. END SUMMARY.

2. KING'S TELEGRAM: IN A MARCH 16 MESSAGE TO ISRAELI PM BEGIN SENT VIA UN SECYGEN WALDHEIM, HASSAN EXPRESSED HIS "EXTREME CONCERN" THAT THIS "DELIBERATE AND FLAGRANT AGGRESSION" IS SERIOUSLY UNDERMINING PEACE EFFORTS. STRESSING MOROCCO'S PAST SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S INITIATIVES, THE

KING SAID THAT THE ISRAELI ATTACK "MAKES IT INEVITABLE FOR US TO BELIEVE THAT WE MIGHT BE MARCHING UP A BLIND ALLEY". HASSAN MAINTAINED THAT MOROCCO'S PREFERENCE IS TO ALLOW A POLICY OF "WISDOM AND MODERATION" IN PURSUING A ME PEACE, BUT PERSISTENT ISRAELI DENIAL OF "ARAB RIGHTS" AND INSISTENCE ON IMPOSING A "FAIT ACCOMPLI" MAY COMPEL MOROCCO "TO PURSUE ANOTHER POLICY". THE KING CONCLUDED BY CALLING FOR AN END TO THE HOSTILITIES AND FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL "SINCE WITHOUT THIS ALL CHANCE OF PEACE IN THE REGION WILL BE DISSIPATED".

3. OTHER REACTIONS: MAJOR MOROCCAN PAPERS OF ALL POLITICAL LEANINGS HAVE TAKEN A FAR MORE PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION. PRO-GOVERNMENT AL-MAGHRIB, FOR EXAMPLE, HELD THAT THIS "AGGRESSION" HAD DEALT "A MORTAL BLOW" TO THE AMERICAN-EGYPTIAN PEACE INITIATIVE. A STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE ISTIQLAL PARTY (WHICH IS LED BY FONMIN BOUCETTA) ARGUED THAT "THIS GENOCIDE ILLUSTRATES ANEW THE TRUE NATURE OF ISRAEL AND REVEALS PART OF ITS PLANS TO LIQUIDATE THE ARAB PEOPLES". CALLING FOR A REUNITING OF ARAB COUNTRIES TO COMBAT THIS AGGRESSION, THE PARTY STATEMENT WARNS THAT THIS ATTACK "IS ONLY A PRELUDE TO OTHER ATTACKS TARGETED AT SYRIA, EGYPT AND JORDAN". ON HIS RETURN MARCH 16 FROM THE U.S., FONMIN BOUCETTA HIMSELF MADE A MORE MEASURED STATEMENT, CONDEMNING THE ISRAELI "AGGRESSION AGAINST THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE", AND THE "VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE ATTACK ON LEBANON'S SOVEREIGNTY".

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4. FOR ITS PART, THE SOCIALIST OPPOSITION (USFP) CONTINUES ITS VEHEMENT DENUNCIATION OF ISRAEL, CLAIMING THAT SADAT'S PEACE EFFORTS HAVE LONG SINCE FAILED.

5. COMMENT: THE KING'S PUBLIC HOPES THAT EGYPTIAN PEACE EFFORTS WILL SURVIVE ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT SHARED BY THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES. THE ISTIQLAL'S STRONG STATEMENT ON THE ISSUE POINTS UP FONMIN BOUCETTA'S DELICATE POSITION ON HAVING TO BALANCE HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO SUPPORT THE KING'S POLICIES WITH THE HARDER-LINE VIEWS OF HIS PARTY.
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